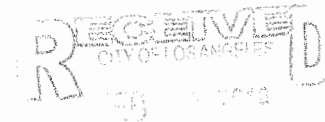


**CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY AND
IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR A 20 ACRE PROPERTY AT
8100/8150 MC GROARTY STREET IN SUNLAND,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.**

March 16, 1990



CITY PLANNING
VAN NUYS

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-ABSTRACT-

An archaeological survey of 20 acres on the north side of the Verdugo Hills produced no evidence of prehistoric or early historic cultural resources. During the past century the northern quarter of the property has been extensively modified. Situated at the base of a slope and adjacent to McGroarty Street, this area has three occupied houses, plus an old bulldozed road, the remains of a large irrigated garden with concrete and granite cobble masonry walls, stairs and ponds, and a small building foundation. Numerous exotic trees and other plants are also present. To the south, a dense cover of chaparral vegetation blankets the steep slopes. A short cul-de-sac street and 11 house pads are planned for the northern area, along with a small cut/fill check dam and other modifications in the central area. These modifications will have a direct impact on the vegetation and various biotic communities, the drainage pattern, and the recent historic remains. These remains are, however, not considered historically significant or otherwise special. Therefore, no additional archaeological investigation is recommended. The proposed project is expected to have no indirect impact whatsoever on local cultural resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Following a request from the McVine Joint Venture and the Verdugo Hills Company of Sunland, a cultural resources survey and impact assessment was conducted for a 20 acre property located on the north flank of the Verdugo Hills in Los Angeles County. The subject property is situated at the base of the hills adjacent to and south of McGroarty Street in the community of Sunland. Map 1, attached, shows the location of the area surveyed, a rectangular lot with the street address 8100/8150 McGroarty Street. A surface reconnaissance survey of the property was completed on March 17, 1990, by Clay A. Singer. No prehistoric or early historic resources were found, but the remains of an extensive terraced and irrigated garden were observed, along with tree occupied houses.

A residential subdivision is planned for a portion of the property. The subdivision involves creation of 11 new building pads, a short cul-de-sac street, and a small cut/fill check dam. This study was prompted by the realization that cultural resources -- including historic and prehistoric archaeological sites -- exist within the Sunland area, and that these resources are often affected by development projects. The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended, stipulates that potential environmental affects be addressed prior to initiation of a project. This report addresses the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project on known and suspected cultural resources in the vicinity. The report which follows describes the results of a complete field survey, reviews and summarizes available data on local archaeological and historic sites, and summarized potential direct and indirect impacts. The overall conclusions of the study are that the proposed development will have no affect any known or suspected cultural resources, and that no additional archaeological investigations are recommended.

BACKGROUND

Until the beginning of the 19th Century, the Verdugo Mountains fell within the territory of the Native Californians called Gabrieleño Indians, or Tongva, one of California's least known native ethnic groups. The name Gabrielino refers specifically to a language group spoken by the prehistoric and early historic Native American population of the greater Los Angeles and Orange County area. The name is generally used to describe the people who spoke a Takic language and lived throughout the Los Angeles Basin, the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, and the southern Islands of Catalina, San Clemente and San Nicolas (Kroeber 1953, Johnston 1962, Heizer 1978).

Generally speaking, the Gabrieleño/Tongva followed an annual subsistence cycle not particularly different from their neighbors. Populations of varying size were involved in ocean fishing and occasional sea mammal hunting, fowling, hunting and trapping, and the seasonal

harvesting of native plants. Village populations consisted of several related families, and other members of a single kin group, who lived at permanent sites along the coastline and in the well watered canyons and interior valleys. An extensive commerce had flourished since earliest times, centering first around the exchange of luxury items, and later extending to consumer products and foods. Over the millennia, changes in climate and shifts in plant and animal resources are believed to have altered social conditions in the region and led to the immigration of ancestral Takic [Gabrielino] speaking people into coastal California beginning around 2000 years ago. But, even prior to their arrival, archaeological evidence suggests that California coastal populations were closely linked with interior populations through a complex network of social, economic, and political alliances, often bonded by kinship. Aboriginal society in southern California began to collapse soon after the introduction of European diseases immediately after contact and colonization in 1769. Native society disintegrated in large part due to epidemic diseases with high mortality rates, and the exacerbating effects of Spanish "missionization".

The archaic view of California Indians as "simple folk", or more derisively as "Mission Indians", has now been replaced by the recognition that most aboriginal societies, including the Gabrielino/Tongva, had particularly sophisticated and complex social, political, and economic systems long before European colonists set foot on American soil. Furthermore, all of California's native societies, some 70 or more in number when the Spanish first arrived, were uniquely adapted to their particular environments, and lived in relative contentment with their neighbors. Some aspects of ancient society survive today among the approximately 300 Tongva/Gabrieleño who live in and around Los Angeles and Orange Counties. One such tradition is a firm attachment to the land of their ancestors, while another is a persistent interest in traditional sites and archaeological materials. The adoption of the name Tongva, a traditional term for "the people", is another indication of cultural life. Most Tongva/Gabrieleño people are displeased by the destruction of archaeological sites and natural habitats. They are particularly upset by the desecration of sacred places including, shrines, burial sites, and mortuary areas within habitation sites.

Official State records and maps show no recorded archaeological sites of any type within a one mile radius of the subject property. The nearest prehistoric(?) site, for which there is any documented information, is (or was) CA-LAN-657, located on an island within the channel of Tujunga Wash about 1.5 miles away (cf. Singer 1981). Somewhat closer, but still more than half mile away, is the McGroarty Cultural Center, formerly the home of John Steven McGroarty. Built in 1923, the house and part of the estate were purchased by the City of Los Angeles in 1953 and converted for use as a cultural arts center. McGroarty, who died in 1944, was a noted journalist, author, playwright and politician. In 1933 he was designated the State Poet Laureate by the California legislature (Grenier, Nunis and Poole 1978:265).

Map 1 shows the location of the property with McGroarty Street forming the northern boundary of the area. Northward from McGroarty Street is a residential neighborhood of single family homes constructed during the past 40 years. South of McGroarty Street only a few dozen homes are situated along the base of the hills which rise abruptly to more than 2000 feet. Elevations within the subject area range from about 1520 feet, next to McGroarty Street, to about 1850 feet, in the southeastern corner.

FIELD RECONASSANCE

A thorough, on-foot reconnaissance of the property was conducted on March 16, 1990. At that time, a careful examination of the northern half of the area was completed and a more casual inspection of the steeper southern slopes was done. The southern half of the area is densely overgrown with chaparral vegetation including live oak, toyon, mountain mahogany, elderberry, black sage, sagebrush, our lord's candle, soap root, wild cucumber, chemise, etcetera. The northern area manifests a mixed vegetation which includes many of exotic trees, shrubs and flowering plants.

Three houses are situated near McGroarty Street in the northern part of the property. One occupies an elevated but flattened ridge, another is nestled in a small canyon, and the third sits next to the street (this last structure is actually not within the subject property). All three houses are occupied at the present time. Also present in this area are the remains of an old bulldozed roadway, an irrigated and terraced garden, and a small concrete slab foundation. The terraced garden was constructed of concrete and granite cobblestones and includes two circular ponds (one with a waterfall), stairways, low walls and planting beds. Buried steel pipes and recent historic refuse were noted along with many non-native plants (e.g. mature eucalyptus, palm, pepper, pine and juniper trees, bushes of oleander and Scotch broom, and many exotic flowers).

Granitic bedrock was exposed in several places, and decomposed granitic soils were abundant. Topsoil was generally dark and humic with crumbly subsoils a lighter brown to reddish-brown. No springs or other natural water sources were found and none are likely to be present anywhere on the property. Similarly, no prehistoric or early historic archaeological materials or features were encountered on the surface, and buried or hidden resources are highly unlikely in this context.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Examination of a 20 acre property on the northern flank of the Verdugo Mountains yielded no evidence of either prehistoric or early historic resources. Bounded on the north by McGroarty Street, the property is largely undeveloped and consists of a north facing slope with three modern wood frame and stucco houses situated at the northern end. In

this same area are the remains of an irrigated and terraced garden characterized by a series of walls, ponds, stairways, foot paths, and flower beds constructed of concrete and granite cobbles, probably during the 1920's. Similar old walls made with locally available cobbles can be found nearby. For example, at the southeast corner of McGroarty Street and Moy Lane, several hundred meters east of the subject property, is an impressive two story Mediterranean/Spanish style house with old palms completely surrounded by a cobblestone wall. Also, farther east, the masonry at McGroarty Park and Cultural Center, and some of the work at the Sunair Home for diabetic and asthmatic children (designated Sanatorium on Map 1), are similar. The Sunair Home, however, was constructed during the 1950's and 1960's and also has some masonry faced with quartz-mica schist quarried in the Sierra Polona region.

Although interesting, the former garden has no particular architectural or historical significance. Few of the original plants remain except for some flowering bulbs, and a few bushes and exotic trees among the masonry features. Like the two story house nearby, the garden may have been constructed as part of the McGroarty Estate in the 1920's. It appears to have been abandoned sometime during the 1950's. While the garden is probably old enough to qualify as an historic site, it most likely does not qualify as a significant environmental or cultural resource under the current provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (cf. Appendix K).

The proposed development will have an affect on the environmental conditions which currently exist within and near the property. Projected earth moving operations will, to varying degrees, affect the three existing residences, and will remove a portion of the hillside vegetation. Nevertheless, grading and construction are not expected to have any direct or indirect impact on either known or suspected cultural resources. Since there are no prehistoric or early historic resources located on or near the property, no direct impacts are anticipated. Similarly, because there are no resources in the immediate vicinity which might be affected by the proposed project, no indirect impacts are expected. In conclusion, the proposed development project will not adversely affect the environment and no additional archaeological investigation is necessary.

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ATTACHMENTS

Map 1. A composite of portions of the Burbank and Sunland, Calif.
7.5' Quadrangles showing the area surveyed for cultural
resources (shaded), 20 acres at 8100/8150 McGroarty Street.